

‘We are Oscar Grant’

Protests hit racist verdict

By Judy Greenspan  
Oakland, Calif.

When the jury returned its verdict in the late afternoon on July 8, protesters in several cities across this state and in other parts of the U.S. expressed their anger and dismay over the involuntary manslaughter conviction of Johannes Mehserle, the Bay Area Rapid Transit cop who shot and killed Oscar Grant.

Family members and friends at impromptu press conferences in Los Angeles and Oakland said that a conviction on any charge less than murder was a racist insult to the memory of Grant, a 22-year-old unarmed Black man who was shot dead by Mehserle on Oakland’s Fruitvale BART platform on New Year’s Day 2009.

Involuntary manslaughter carries a sentence of two to four years in prison. The jury also added a “gun enhancement” charge that carries a maximum of 10 additional years. The sentencing, set originally for Aug. 6, has been postponed at the request of Mehserle’s attorney.

John Burris, a longtime Bay Area progressive attorney, stated unequivocally that Mehserle should have received a murder conviction. At a press conference in Los Angeles following the verdict, Grant’s mother and uncle both expressed their outrage over the involuntary manslaughter conviction.

**Protests demand justice**

Demonstrations were held in several cities throughout the state. A vigil was held in Fresno and a protest in Santa Cruz. Over 100 people gathered for a speak-out against police brutality and racism in Leimert Park in Los Angeles. Speakers included members of the L.A. Coalition for Justice for Oscar Grant and the Unión del Barrio.

Solidarity actions were also held in New York City and Baltimore on July 9.

Demonstrators who gathered in downtown Oakland on the day of the verdict had to overcome a three-week-long barrage of scare tactics by the local media, the state and federal governments, and law enforcement agencies.

At the beginning of June, in anticipation of the verdict, tremendous pressure was put on community organizations, student groups and local organizers to do what they could to prevent a rebellion like the one that took place after Grant’s killing by Mehserle. After the New Year’s Day killing in 2009, hundreds of people in Oakland took to the streets in anger and protested the racist slaying.



People take to streets of Oakland after Mehserle verdict.

WWW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

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For weeks before the Mehserle verdict, state and local agencies threatened to lock down government offices and send workers home when the jury returned. Local shop owners were advised to board up their businesses and go home in anticipation of the verdict.

Downtown Oakland was a boarded-up ghost town the afternoon of July 8. The stores were closed. There were no cars on the streets. The usually hectic corner of 14th and Broadway was eerily quiet. An armed phalanx of Oakland police stood menacingly on the side streets and in the BART station. But even this microcosm of a police state could not stop the outpouring of anger over the Mehserle verdict.

The protest in downtown Oakland started with a street rally around 5 p.m. and quickly grew to about 1,000 people. This open-mike event was planned and organized by local community organizations and city leaders. Rally organizers opened with the chant, “We are Oscar Grant,” which was quickly picked up by the crowd.

Many of the speakers were young Black and Latino/a activists who demanded justice for the memory of Grant and for the people of Oakland. A student from Oakland’s Laney College said, “I’m so proud of Oakland. When Oscar Grant was shot, people took to the streets. We have to continue this resistance,” the young woman stated.

**Violence of the cops, system**

At the main rally it was said that people should be calm and “nonviolent” in the face of this unjust verdict. Oscar Grant Sr., the grandfather of

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PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

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# Facebook’s censorship of left must be fought

By Greg Butterfield

The U.S.-based social-networking monolith Facebook has begun an all-out assault on its members, deleting three active groups that advocated for progressive and radical causes, permanently banning the accounts of four individuals who administered one group, and sending threatening messages to others.

The groups deleted include Boycott BP, a campaign against the Big Oil company responsible for one of history’s worst ecological disasters; the PFLP Solidarity Group, based in New Zealand with members around the globe, in support of the Palestinian resistance movement; and Free Ricardo Palmera, a group advocating support for a leftist Colombian guerrilla leader who is imprisoned in the U.S. in violation of international law.

Facebook is carrying out its censorship campaign against the left under cover of its arbitrary “terms of service.”

Josh Sykes, administrator of the deleted Free Ricardo Palmera group, received this message: “The group Free Ricardo Palmera! has been removed because it violated our Terms of Use. Among other things, groups that are hateful, threatening, or obscene are not allowed. We also take down groups that attack an individual or group, or advertise a product or service. Continued misuse of Facebook’s features could result in your account being disabled.”

None of the affected groups was hateful, threatening or obscene in any way. And as anyone who is familiar with Facebook knows, truly hateful, racist, anti-Muslim, anti-women, anti-gay, pro-cop, pro-imperialist and pro-Zionist apartheid groups abound and their members post freely.

Marika Pratley, PFLP Solidarity Campaign coordinator and group administrator, said, “This was clearly a political attack against the PFLP and an attempt by Facebook to censor and shut down the solidarity campaign.

“The PFLP advocates a single secular state in all of Palestine, with equal rights for all, regardless of race or religion, and is the second largest group in the PLO. Facebook has deemed that support for the PFLP violates its terms and conditions while allowing many blatantly racist anti-Palestinian groups to continue to exist without such censorship.”

Facebook is well-known for invasions of personal privacy, but it also has a reputation for censoring leftist causes and national liberation movements. Since 2008, pages and groups supporting Cuba have sometimes been deleted without warning, including one administered by this writer. My personal account was also temporarily suspended.

Another Cuba supporter, an Egyptian-born student activist living outside the U.S., had her account permanently banned. So did a Palestinian student activist from New Jersey whose pro-Palestine liberation group was deleted.

While Facebook is notorious for making its members’ personal information available to U.S. corporations, police agencies and the U.S. government, it guards its own contact information zealously. Not only do members sign away their right of appeal to Facebook’s censors, but it is almost impossible to lodge a protest. Difficult-to-access options that existed a couple of years ago, at the time of the earlier shutdowns, have been removed.

### Boycott BP restored, big battles remain

The 700,000-member Boycott BP group was restored

after a huge public outcry, including coverage on CNN. Facebook now claims the group was disabled “in error.”

While this is an important victory — and shows that Facebook can be pushed back — it is a harder road for lesser-known cases like Palmera’s or more controversial causes like the Palestinian resistance movement.

It’s important to ask, which groups will Facebook target next? Supporters of political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal? Supporters of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla? Opponents of U.S. wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea and Iran? Supporters of the revolutionary movements in Venezuela, the Philippines and Nepal? Abortion-rights advocates?

Facebook may try to cover its censorship of groups like the PFLP Solidarity Campaign by pointing to the terrible June 21 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project, which criminalizes free speech under material support statutes related to groups the U.S. government falsely deems “terrorist” — including longstanding national liberation movements in Palestine, Lebanon, Colombia, Nepal and the Philippines.

But the fact is, Facebook and other U.S. corporations benefit from and hold enormous sway over the decisions of the Supreme Court — which, like the other branches of U.S. government, exists to preserve and strengthen the rule of capitalists. The bogus and unconstitutional decision of the Supreme Court must not become an excuse to let Facebook and its ilk off the hook.

Social networking sites have expanded to the point where they are an important and necessary component of all sorts of progressive social advocacy, from modest reforms to revolutionary social change. People all over the world rely on them, so it is especially ludicrous for Facebook to impose the rules of U.S. imperialist foreign policy on its members.

Social networks should belong to the people, not to U.S. corporations. Taking the fight to Facebook now is an important step in that direction.

### What you can do

On July 7 the profiles of the three administrators of the Ricardo Palmera group — Josh Sykes, Angela Denio and Tom Burke — were disabled by Facebook with no reason given. Ivan Enrile, an activist from Manila, reported that his profile was disabled because he set up a Facebook page in solidarity with the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso movement. City University of New York students were warned that a group they set up to support prisoner Fahad Hashmi was a “threat to national security.” The list continues to grow.

On Facebook, a group has been set up called Stop Facebook Assault on Progressive Causes. Join and invite your Facebook contacts. Help them get informed and involved. If you have been censored or threatened, let the group know.

Repost this article. Blog and email about the issue. Contact local and national media and let them know what you think about Facebook’s campaign against radical and progressive causes.

Call and write Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to demand an end to the censorship of left groups and progressive causes, and to threats against individual Facebook members: 156 University Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301; 650-543-4800. (If you come across better contact information for Zuckerberg and other Facebook bigwigs, please spread the word.)

The struggle continues! ☐

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## As Pentagon's problems pile up

# Anti-war conference to plan action program

By John Catalinotto

Afghan resistance fighters killed six GIs in six different battles on July 10 as Gen. David Petraeus took over command from the fired Gen. Stanley McChrystal. The disarray in the U.S. command and the growing casualties highlight the disintegration of the U.S. war strategy. They also underline the importance of an upcoming national anti-war conference whose goal is producing an action program for the coming period.

A growing majority of the U.S. population and an even greater percentage of President Barack Obama's voters are fed up with the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, just as they were with the occupation of Iraq under George W. Bush. With 223 U.S. troops dying in Afghanistan this year and 22 in July alone, this opposition will only grow.

These questions remain: When will this opposition turn into active struggle? When will it lead to action in the streets? Will this movement join with the class struggle? Will U.S. troops move from individual dissidence to organized resistance, as they did during the war against Vietnam?

Those actively seeking answers to these questions should consider attending the National Conference to Bring the Troops Home Now! scheduled for July 23-25 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany, N.Y.

This conference is bringing together activists and organizations from different sectors of war opponents — from the explicitly anti-imperialist like BAYAN to the militantly pacifist like Creative Voices for Non-Violence.

The National Assembly to End the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and Occupation has played a key role in organizing the conference. It is supported by Veterans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, U.S. Labor Against the War, Peace Action and the National Lawyers Guild, to name just some of the 31 co-sponsoring organizations.

### From Pakistan to Haiti to home

The conference's action proposal demands an immediate end to the illegal occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and prepares the movement to respond to an attack on Iran. It also joins those basic anti-war demands with calls to end the enormous waste of human and natural resources that feeds the war machine and also with appeals for a moratorium on home seizures.

Workshops will take up many international issues, including Palestine, the U.S. occupation of Haiti, U.S. intervention in Colombia, global warming and the environment, the role of poor people's movements and much more, including developments in the GI resistance movement. (See [nationalpeaceconference.org](http://nationalpeaceconference.org) for more details.)

While the event is not intended to be the kind of mass gathering that took place at the U.S. Social Forum, it will be consciously aiming to plan actions for the coming months to combat the war machine, not just to produce resolutions. The discussion will also reflect political changes within the anti-war movement.

Like the USSF, which included 45 workshops on the struggle for Palestinian liberation, the Albany conference also has scheduled some important workshops on this issue. Palestinian solidarity activists are preparing resolutions and asking for strong participation to assure that the Palestinian issue is integrated with a general anti-war program — a progressive development.

In another big step forward, right after the conference ends on Sunday, July 25, there will be a public demonstration in Albany in solidarity with the Muslim community, which has faced discrimination and persecution by the U.S. political police. The Muslim Solidarity Committee and Project SALAM (Support And Legal Advocacy for Muslims) have called on conference participants to meet at the east steps of the Capitol, Washington and State Streets, at 1 p.m. for a march to Masjid As-Salam at 278 Central Ave., where there will be a meeting and refreshments.

The Muslim groups called the march to remember "the sixth anniversary of the arrests of two Muslim men from the

Albany community and all Muslims preemptively prosecuted by the U.S. government," they say in an e-mail. The groups will also participate in a conference luncheon panel on political repression and closing Guantánamo. (See [www.project-salam.org](http://www.project-salam.org))

Leading speakers at the conference include political analyst Noam Chomsky; Donna Dewitt, president of the South Carolina AFL-CIO; Cindy Sheehan; Media Benjamin of Code Pink; and Pam Africa, a spokesperson for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Also speaking and endorsing are activists who regularly contribute articles to Workers World newspaper, such as Teresa Gutierrez of the May 1 Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Sara Flounders of the International Action Center and Larry Holmes of the Bail Out the People Movement.

WW Contributing Editor Abayomi Azikiwe, who is also editor of the Pan African News Service, is taking part in two workshops: "War, Militarization and the Assault on Civil Liberties and Communities of Color," and "U.S. Economic and Military Expansion into Africa."

The schedule for the weekend provides opportunities for anti-imperialists to intervene and fight for their positions within the context of building the broadest possible anti-war actions. Workers World Party will participate and WW newspaper will cover the conference.

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## Arizona protests continue as

# Feds pressure bosses to fire immigrants

By Paul Teitelbaum  
Tucson, Ariz.

Once again Tucson activists filled the intersection of Congress and Granada to call for resistance to the notorious SB 1070 law, slated to take effect on July 29. Gathering in front of the state building on July 9, Tucsonans protested and listened to local poets and spoken-word artists denounce SB 1070 and proclaim "We will resist" this racist law.

Indigenous activists spoke of the continuing injustice on their lands and offered traditional prayers and dance to build unity and beat back the attack unleashed by SB 1070. An open mike was made available, and many people, most notably youth, expressed their outrage and determination to organize and fight back against this law and the right-wing forces that pushed it upon Arizona.

Two days later, on July 11, members of the Ya Basta! Coalition, which initiated the call for resistance to SB 1070, were invited to meet with an interfaith group of churches planning how they can participate in the day of resistance on July 29. Ya Basta! members spoke of the group's intention to fill the streets of downtown and shut down the city. "We want no Operation Streamline that day," Lynda Cruz said, referring to the mass trials of immigrants that occur in the federal courthouse downtown. "We want no business as usual in the state building," she continued. "We want to shut down downtown."

Other Ya Basta! members talked of how they were encouraging a day of no work, no school, no buying and selling — a day when people will stop everything and fill up the streets of downtown Tucson. Many of the churches participating in the meeting expressed interest in this and offered



WW PHOTO: PAUL TEITELBAUM

to organize caravans from their parishes to downtown.

### Federal lawsuit, increased raids

On July 6 the Obama Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the State of Arizona and Gov. Jan Brewer, seeking to stop the enforcement of SB 1070. The federal lawsuit claims that by passing SB 1070 the State of Arizona preempts federal law and violates what is known as the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Supremacy Clause makes the Constitution and federal statutes the highest law in the land. An individual state may not create laws that interfere with federal law. Since SB 1070 represents an attempt by Arizona to establish its own immigration policy, the lawsuit claims, it interferes with federal immigration policy and therefore federal law.

The lawsuit also claims that the State of Arizona will preempt federal law with

SB 1070 by overriding federal law that allows the Department of Homeland Security to exercise prerogatives when it comes to immigration policy. SB 1070 allows no prerogatives and mandates that police agents must comply with the law or face a civil liability. There are times when federal immigration law may be waived and a person is allowed to remain in the United States, such as in the case of the anti-Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, who freely resides in Florida. The federal government claims that SB 1070 would preempt this prerogative.

It is clear from the Obama administration's statements and the reading of the lawsuit that this filing does nothing to advance the immigrant rights struggle. There is scant mention of racial profiling or the expanding police powers that SB 1070 unleashes. Nor has Obama, Attorney General Eric Holder or anyone else in the administration taken the time to dispel Gov.

Brewer's wild statements and outright lies about increased border crime, drug trafficking, extortion, kidnappings, murders and even beheadings all caused, she says, by migrants. (Washington Post, July 11)

Although an injunction against SB 1070 would be welcome, it will do nothing to affect the war being waged against immigrants. The racist demagoguery continues, the border militarization continues, the community and workplace raids continue. Deportations have increased, far outpacing the levels set during the Bush administration.

The immigration section of the Department of Homeland Security has undertaken a more clandestine, less visible approach to terrorizing immigrant workers. Instead of descending on a business in a full military-style assault and rounding up workers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents now quietly audit the employee records of companies, levy fines and force the company to fire undocumented workers. The workers' lives are thrown into turmoil, and the company is pushed to request low-wage "guest workers" to replace those they just fired. (New York Times, July 9)

The outcome of the federal lawsuit against SB 1070 will not affect the tactics of Tucson's Ya Basta! Coalition. The Month of Resistance to SB 1070 continues and plans for a major mobilization on July 29 are being refined as the coalition gathers steam.

If SB 1070 is declared null and void in a courtroom, the people will still be in the streets, letting the state know that they will not tolerate this racist attack. Activists demand an end to the militarization of the border, the criminalization of migrants and the attacks against workers, whether by military-style ICE raids or backroom audits. □



# ‘Excluded’ workers build unity & fight back

By Dante Strobino

Workers historically excluded from labor organizing and protections are challenging the mainstream trade union movement in the United States, which is now finding itself in increasing decline with deindustrialization and massive job loss. Domestic workers, public sector workers in the South, farmworkers, day laborers and temporary workers have begun to organize against their exclusion from U.S. labor laws and for rights other workers have won over years of struggle.

Many of these workers joined an Excluded Workers Congress and workshops at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit in June to discuss steps toward winning recognition of their rights, dignity and fairness at work.

The National Domestic Worker Alliance, the National Day Labor Organizing Network, the United Electrical Workers (UE), the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, Jobs with Justice and other grassroots workers’ organizations participated in the congress.

The National Labor Relations Act, passed in 1935, excluded domestic workers and farmworkers, but it contained important protections such as enforcement of collective bargaining agreements between workers’ organizations and their bosses. After the NLRA’s passage, many corporations and bosses began to look for ways to erase these protections.

The Taft-Hartley Act, passed in 1947, weakened these protections and gave states free rein to regulate public sector workers. This law had the deepest impact in the U.S. South, where the inheritors of the slave-owning class remained in power and the trade union movement had never been able to build a strong base. This allowed for laws such as North Carolina’s general statute 95-98, which was passed by an all-white legislature in 1959. This statute prevents public sector workers

from exercising the right to collectively bargain.

At the USSF, workers came together in a workshop titled, “Plant Occupations and Other Strategies for Organizing and Defending Workers’ Rights,” where they shared their organizations’ best practices to defend past gains and win recognition of unprotected workers.

President Armando Robles of Chicago UE Local 1110 described the Republic Windows and Doors factory takeover in December 2008 that galvanized national attention. The pressure forced Bank of America to pay a \$1.75 million settlement to the workers for attempting to close the plant without properly warning them. Since then, the factory has reopened under new ownership and the workers’ union contract was upheld.

UE has since started a new effort in Chicago, organizing the low-wage, temporary workers in warehouses — the Warehouse Workers for Justice campaign. Warehouse workers are an important link in the global commodity distribution chain.

Chicago is the only location in the Western Hemisphere where all six Class I railroads meet. Thus Chicago transports half the country’s rail freight. Some estimate that Chicago is now the world’s third-largest container port after Hong Kong and Singapore, handling almost a trillion dollars in goods each year.

Meanwhile, the workers, almost all hired on temporary status, have few to no rights or protections. Workers need to earn at least \$16 an hour to sustain a family in Chicago, yet most warehouse jobs pay less than \$10 an hour, even to experienced workers. Starting pay is often minimum wage and some workers report pay less than the minimum. Some bosses don’t pay workers at all, stealing their wages. (warehouseworker.org)

Cindy Marble, a warehouse worker fired for trying to organize a union with UE, brought her militant, fightback spirit

to Detroit: “We won’t turn back now,” she said. UE’s Warehouse Workers for Justice campaign is now calling on all supporters to boycott Bizzell vacuum cleaners. (See warehouseworker.org.)

Across the country, in the homes of rich people, immigrant domestic workers who are mostly women face a similar fate. Their employers think they can get away with imposing violence, wage theft and slave-like conditions on the workers.

Enma Delgado, a domestic worker and member of Mujeres Activas de San Francisco, spoke on the panel about their decade-long struggle to organize California’s domestic workers. Of the group’s more than 300 members, she says, “We aren’t a union because we don’t have the right, we are excluded but we still fight!”

Another panelist, Saket Soni, of the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice, spoke of his group’s efforts organizing guest workers across the South. Soni discussed three tactics: hunger strikes, very long walks and citizen’s arrests. They used all three in a recent campaign to win justice for temporary guest workers from India over their job conditions at a marine oil-rig company in Mississippi.

“Workers were forced to pay thousands of dollars for visas, placed in a labor camp and denied basic rights,” said Soni. “Only through membership organizations can we build power to transform working conditions and to transform the labor movement in the U.S.”

There were trade unionists from struggles across the globe, including a leader of the CGT confederation in France. The CGT had just held an important plant occupation to beat back concessions. Also on the panel were Ashim Roy from the New Trade Union Initiative in India, and General Secretary Raúl Pérez Guzmán, of SITEM and Frenta Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT) in Mexico.

On July 1, the New York state Sen-

ate approved a version of the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and Gov. David Paterson announced he would sign it into law. It calls on domestic workers to get paid time and a half for hours worked beyond 40 hours per week, three paid sick days after a year’s service, and protections under anti-discrimination and worker compensation laws.

“It was an incredible moment of validation,” said Priscilla González, director of Domestic Workers United, the organization behind the bill. “We started six years ago by walking into legislators’ offices and educating them. Now we found ourselves witnessing senator after senator thanking these immigrant women of color who had been invisible for so long.”

However, the new law still omits some of the workers’ core demands, such as the right to sleep five hours uninterrupted by their boss, paid vacation days and advanced notice of termination. The bill also calls on the state’s Department of Labor to study the feasibility of collective bargaining for domestic workers and issue a report by November.

UE Local 150, North Carolina Public Service Workers union, which is mostly African-American, has been fighting for workers in the state Department of Health and Human Services. More than 3,000 of these workers have voted for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights and have taken many trips to the state legislature to push for its approval.

Larsene Taylor, a health care technician at Cherry Hospital and chair of UE 150’s Department of Health and Human Services Council, told how North Carolina state mental health workers are forced to work under dangerous conditions with chronic understaffing.

Ai-Jen Poo of the National Domestic Worker Alliance closed the workshop with the words, “Where there is oppression, there will be resistance, leadership and courage.” □

## From ‘Low-Wage Capitalism’

# UPS Teamsters strike & Justice for Janitors

*The following is excerpted from the book “Low-Wage Capitalism,” a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on the U.S. working class by Fred Goldstein, published in the fall of 2008. Beginning with our issue of July 1, Workers World has been running excerpts from Part 3, “Lessons from the Past for Future Struggles.” The wide range of struggles covered, from the 1930s to the present, shows the capacity of the U.S. working class to engage in militant struggle at great sacrifice. The willingness of the rank-and-file workers to fight back against the anti-labor offensive of the last 30 years shows that the decline in the labor movement was not inevitable. This week’s excerpt gives two more concrete examples of militant struggle. For information about the book, visit [www.lowwagecapitalism.com](http://www.lowwagecapitalism.com).*

### 1997: UPS Teamsters

The strike against United Parcel Service was a powerful one that fought to reverse concessions, which had begun in 1982. The company had won the right to create a two-tier, part-time system of employment. In August of 1997 the 185,000 members of the UPS division of the Teamsters union waged a 15-day strike that electrified the labor movement and the working class as a whole. Despite compromises made in the final settlement, it was understood, rightly so, as the

first major victory for a significant section of the working class after two decades of defeat and retreat.

The strike was led by Teamsters President Ron Carey, who had democratized the union during his tenure. It was won by meticulous planning for a genuine class struggle, bringing in the rank-and-file at every stage. The struggle was popular in the union movement and among the working class as a whole because it was projected as a struggle against part-time and low-wage work — not just for UPS workers, but for the working class as a whole. Sixty percent of the 185,000 UPS workers were part-time workers who earned only \$9 per hour, as opposed to \$19.95 an hour, plus benefits, for full-time workers.

The UPS Teamster leadership prepared for the strike for over a year. In formulating their bargaining position, the leadership of the UPS division sent a questionnaire to all 185,000 workers asking for their views on the most important issues. Full-time jobs were the overwhelming priority for the workers. In addition, 10,000 of these workers were receiving part-time pay but were working 35 hours or more a week.

The union collected 100,000 signatures on a petition supporting its demands. It distributed the union’s position at workplaces, sports events, and other sites long in advance. It prepared a strong strike apparatus.

Once the negotiations were underway, the union sent a video to all UPS shop stewards to keep them up to date. During the strike, the union updated its website every few hours, faxed bulletins to Teamster locals, and set up a toll-free hotline for strikers.

The negotiations were to begin in July of 1997 but rallies were organized around the country beginning in March and continued to multiply up until the strike deadline. Carey had even gone to Germany and France and worked with the UPS unions there to support the strike. When the UPS rank-and-file marched into battle they were thoroughly unified, highly organized, and prepared for struggle against a ruthless corporate giant with a world empire. (Much of this information is from Steven Greenhouse, “Yearlong Effort Key to Success for Teamsters,” New York Times, Aug. 25, 1997.)

The strike was won through a major test of strength between labor and capital. The AFL-CIO leadership supported the strike and John Sweeney promised to back the Teamsters’ strike benefit fund with \$10 million a week. During the strike President Bill Clinton was under pressure — from not only UPS but also Wall Street — to invoke the Taft-Hartley Act. The strength and broad popularity of the UPS workers pushed the Clinton administration back, even though Clinton finally pressured a settlement and leaned on the

union to compromise. Nevertheless, the UPS workers forced the company to agree to turn 10,000 part-time workers into full-time employees, won raises for the lower-paid workers, and warded off an attack on pension funding.

The forward momentum of the workers’ struggle arising out of the UPS strike was soon undermined, however. Immediately after the strike, the government framed up Carey on charges of illegally funneling funds to his union election campaign fund. A federal court cleared him of all the charges, but a so-called Independent Review Board got Carey barred for life from running for Teamster office.

This board had been set up by the Justice Department in 1989 to oversee the Teamsters. It was headed by William Webster, a former director of both the CIA and the FBI. The Democratic National Committee cooperated with the frame-up, despite the fact that the AFL-CIO leadership, including Carey, had poured hundreds of millions of dollars into getting Clinton elected.

Fearing a government attack, the AFL-CIO leadership left Carey to face the frame-up and ouster alone. Instead of standing up and challenging the government to indict the entire top leadership of the union movement, and preparing the rank-and-file to defend the leader who had launched the biggest union challenge

*Continued on page 5*



# UAW head, Rev. Jackson announce jobs march

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

Solidarity House, the international headquarters of the United Auto Workers, was the scene of a packed press conference the afternoon of July 12. Recently elected UAW President Bob King joined with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and other union, political and religious leaders to announce an Aug. 28 march in Detroit that will kick off a campaign for “jobs, justice and peace.”

“We have made a decision at the UAW that to do the best job taking care of our membership we’ve got to be out there in the streets fighting for social and economic justice,” declared King.

August 28 is the anniversary of the 1963 march on Washington led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Just like in 1963 when Dr. King led the Freedom Walk of 125,000 in Detroit where he originally delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, this year’s march will also be building for a national march in Washington, this time the Oct. 2 march for “Jobs, justice and equality for all.”

A press release issued by the UAW and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition stated the reasons behind the new campaign: “No group has suffered more from [the] eco-

nomie meltdown than working men and women. The auto industry was decimated and workers paid the price. Urban America is in crisis and teachers, transportation workers, and all who do the hands-on work that make our cities run are the first to feel the effects of budget cuts. Unemployment continues at around 9.8 percent. Detroit is ground zero of this national crisis. ...

“In Appalachia and the Gulf, years of unenforced regulation, driven by corporate greed and government complicity, have led to needless deaths and destruction in the coal and oil fields. Our national infrastructure is crumbling — industry, education, transportation, [the] environment — while millions of talented workers stand by, ready to stem the tide.

“Poverty is on the rise. Home and church foreclosures continue to mount and student loan defaults are increasing. Our cities are under siege. ... It’s time to revive the War on Poverty.”

The campaign calls for “jobs and economic reconstruction, reindustrialization and trade policies that will create jobs, support manufacturing and put workers first.” It demands justice by the enforcement of workers’ rights, civil rights, industrial regulation, strong urban policy, fair and just education, and economic and health policy.

It also calls for peace by “ending the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, saving lives and redirecting the war budget to rebuild” the U.S.

Bob King replied affirmatively when asked by a reporter if he supported a moratorium on foreclosures. The union leader’s support for a foreclosure moratorium

was noted by the Detroit Free Press, one of two big-business-owned daily newspapers in the city. In June King joined community and religious leaders in a march on Chase Bank in downtown Detroit during the U.S. Social Forum to demand a moratorium on foreclosures and justice for North Carolina tobacco field workers. □

## Gulf activists say ‘Corporations must pay for environmental damage’



Survivors of Hurricane Katrina and BP oil spill propose actions at Social Forum.

WW PHOTO: BETSEY PIETTE

By Betsey Piette

*On June 25 more than 300 people attending the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit took part in a People’s Movement Assembly organized around global ecological justice and environmental racism. This is Part 2 of Piette’s coverage.*

A particularly moving part of this People’s Movement Assembly was a panel of speakers from communities of color in the Gulf of Mexico region. They were first displaced because of devastating hurricanes, starting with Katrina in August 2005, and then because of the enormous environmental destruction caused by the explosion and oil gush of BP’s deepwater well.

Jamie Billiot spoke on behalf of 17,000 Indigenous people from the United Houma Nation, living in marshes in southwest Louisiana who, for many generations, made their living fishing but can do so no longer. “We are forced to work for BP and ExxonMobil. We have to force these companies to take responsibility for the damage they are doing.”

The loss of jobs in the fishing industry has also taken a heavy toll on the Vietnamese-American community on the Gulf Coast. John Win, a youth organizer with the Vietnamese Americans Community Association in New Orleans, noted that among the roughly 40,000 Vietnamese Americans who live in the area, 80 percent of families — mostly employed in the fishing industry and restaurants — have been affected by the oil spill.

“BP pays claims up to \$500 per month, which is not enough when you have families to feed, boat loans to repay and housing debt,” Win said. “There is also a serious problem of risk to mental health including depression and even suicides by people who can’t work any more.”

“The debate on immigration, on migration, is really a debate on displacement,” stated Colette Pichon Battle, program director with the Gulf Coast Fellowship for Community Transformation in Slidell, La., who had also participated in a panel of Katrina survivors at the 2007 U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta.

“After a painful five years people have just rebuilt their houses, just started their families again, just come back,” Battle said. “Now we’re being displaced again.

It’s happening in the Gulf Coast because of oil, because of gas, because of industry — it’s time for us to stand up and stop what is happening.”

Battle placed the blame squarely on the destruction of wetland marshes by channels created by the oil industry to move their tankers and machinery. “These storms — Katrina, Rita, Gustoff, Ike — that hit us all in the last five years, caused so much damage because wetlands have been absolutely decimated.

“In disasters like Katrina things happen that don’t get talked about — people get killed,” Battle continued. “Recently in New Orleans, police officers came forward to admit they shot people on the bridge who were just trying to leave the city. The prison population in Louisiana is the largest in the world. After Katrina, schools in New Orleans were privatized; they start tracking Black children in the fourth grade to figure out how many prison beds they’ll need down the road. This all connects to the wetlands — if not for that destruction, these things wouldn’t have happened.”

Tanya Turner, an activist with Mountain Justice in Kentucky, spoke on the impoverishment of isolated communities in the eastern part of her state and the devastation caused by the coal industry’s practice of removing entire mountain tops and dumping the resulting rubble into streams as “valley fills.” “We have the best politicians that coal money can buy,” she said wryly.

Navaho environmental activist Jihan Gearon concluded the panel by describing conditions on her Arizona reservation, home to oil, gas, coal and uranium industry expansion. “We are economic hostages, intentionally and purposely put in a situation where our economic development depends on us agreeing to the destruction of the environment and our homes.”

Following the presentations, the attendees broke out into several regional and one international group to take up action proposals, including mobilizing against Arizona SB 1070 on July 29; coordinated actions in solidarity with Gulf Coast residents on Aug. 29 in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina; and strategies to push for proposals around ecological justice raised at the April 2010 climate conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia. □

## R.I. rally says ‘Extend jobless benefits’

A coalition of unions and community groups held a rally on the steps of City Hall in Providence, R.I., July 7 to demand that unemployment benefits be extended along with COBRA health care coverage for jobless workers. The federal government had just allowed extended jobless benefits to expire after 99 weeks. Unemployment in Rhode Island is officially 12.3 percent. Many jobless workers now have nothing to fall back on as the capitalist economic crisis rages on.

Among those in the coalition were the R.I. Unemployed Council, Ocean State Action, The George Wiley Center, DARE, Jobs with Justice, AFSCME Council 94, United Service & Allied Workers and United Food & Commercial Workers.

The R.I. Unemployed Council statement also called for a federal jobs or income program and pointed out that the trillions spent on war and bank bailouts could more than fund it.

— Bill Bateman

to big business in two decades, they abandoned the struggle. The forward momentum gained by the militant mass struggle of 185,000 workers, backed by workers everywhere, soon died down. What the mass struggle had won was diminished by the craven retreat of the leadership.

### 2000: Justice for Janitors, Los Angeles

Workers in the Service Employees International Union, mainly immigrants, showed their militancy during the Justice for Janitors campaign against the commercial real estate industry in Los Angeles that began in the late 1980s and culminated in a major strike in 2000. They carried out strikes; waged militant corporate campaigns in which they crashed boardrooms and marched onto golf courses; held mass marches with civil disobedience and blocking traffic. They endured mass arrests and beatings, faced SWAT teams, and defied the brutal, racist Los Angeles police. They organized major networks of community support and won important contracts against giant real estate interests.

Rank-and-file organization and militancy was the essential ingredient in their victories. The willingness and ability of the SEIU leadership in Los Angeles to organize the ranks, support their militancy, and mobilize union and community support was decisive. The workers were chambermaids, porters, cooks, clerks — the lowest-paid service workers.

The union disregarded company contracts signed by the landlords with out-

sourcing firms and battled the owners directly. These contracts skirted legality by allowing management to hire workers below union scale, without benefits or protections of any kind, to do the same work they had been doing before. The local leadership of the SEIU got around these legal loopholes and, by directing their struggles against the real enemy, defeated this dangerous outsourcing tactic.

Nor did they get bogged down in National Labor Relations Board electoral machinery but simply signed up the workers and demanded recognition. The union victories over a period of more than a decade were fueled by the energy and determination of the workers themselves, many of whom had battled dictatorships and political repression in their native countries — Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti, among others.

Whatever the merits of the settlements, they improved the conditions of the workers. But the key point is that the workers showed their willingness over a period of a decade to risk arrest, deportation and material hardship, once they were organized for struggle and could see the possibility of victory.

Furthermore, the janitors’ victories strengthened the labor movement in Los Angeles and the whole region among immigrant workers as a whole and spread to other cities around the country.

*Next: 1998: Flint Workers shut down General Motors. Send email to fgoldstein@workers.org.*



## Youth extend solidarity with rebellion

# FIST demands justice for Oscar Grant



*The following statement was issued by the militant youth organization Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.*

When the jury in the trial of Johannes Mehserle, the former Bay Area Rapid Transit cop who shot and killed Oscar Grant III, rendered a verdict of guilty of involuntary manslaughter, many were undoubtedly angry but few were actually surprised.

From the very beginning, days after the shooting on Jan. 1, 2009, BART and the administration of the city of Oakland appeared to be trying to sweep the killing of another unarmed Black man under the rug. But the shot still rings in the ears of those who have seen the video or were there in person when Mehserle squeezed the trigger.

BART officials initially refused to release the cop's name. Mehserle refused to submit to an interview and the officials never forced him to. After the video aired on television the whole city became aware of what others at the Fruitvale station had witnessed that early morning on New Year's Day.

The next day, the day of the funeral of this 22-year-old father of a young daughter, a rebellion broke out in response to BART's and the city's negligence. It was an act of militant resistance by people who had become fed up with the killings of people of color, primarily Black people in the Bay Area, by police.

This action put pressure on the cops

and ultimately led to Mehserle, who had become a fugitive, being arrested in Nevada and extradited back to California, where he was charged with murder.

Another rebellion was touched off just hours after Mehserle's slap-on-the-wrist verdict was rendered by a jury that didn't include one Black person. The city administration ordered hundreds of cops in full riot gear out on the streets, making Oakland appear even more as an occupied city.

Yet the city administration has been able to confuse some in the progressive movement by characterizing the participants as "outsiders" and condemning the acts of those who rebelled, casting them in the same light as the cops who arrested dozens of people.

Some of those arrested had not even participated in the rebellion, including elderly people and well-known attorney Walter Riley, father of hip-hop artist Boots Riley of The Coup, among others.

The Grant family and others in the Black community have the right to be cautious and the family merely wants justice, for Mehserle to be charged and convicted as the murderer that he is.

The oppressed Black community in Oakland, which deals with regular police occupation and daily violence from cops, certainly doesn't need another excuse for cops to brutalize the community. The rebellion, however, was an expression of anger predicated on an unjust verdict and an unjust process, one that saw Mehserle and his defense counsel granted favorable mo-

tion after favorable motion, starting with the change of venue from Alameda to Los Angeles County.

### A just response

The rebellion was not pre-written or "destined" to happen, but a just and commensurate response, entirely avoidable if justice had been dispensed, if the proceedings had been fair in the eyes of the Grant family and the community, which they were not.

Rebellions happen in unjust societies, where injustice is systemic, as it is in the U.S. The system here is based on profit, from whence exploitation and oppression come. Racism, sexism and homophobia are part of the capitalist culture and necessary weapons used by the wealthy to forestall the unity of the majority.

Therefore, rebellions as an act are right, and the moral and other authority rests with those who rebel, not the administrators of the cities, states and the federal government, nor their police or other agents used to control and maintain the status quo.

The judges, Alameda Superior Court Judge Morris Jacobson and Judge Robert Perry in Los Angeles, the city of Oakland, BART officials and other administrators and state officials bear the responsibility for the rebellion, just as they do for letting the circumstances exist wherein a cop gets off with a light sentence that will most likely see him walk out of prison in two years.

The rebellion that occurred, viewed in light of the years of police harassment and killings and the slap-on-the-wrist conviction of Mehserle, was understandable and justified. If it were not for the rebellion on Jan. 7, 2009, Mehserle may never even have been arrested.

For the media and state authorities to focus on broken windows, shoes liberated from a store, overturned police cars or burned dumpsters is to blame the victims instead of the victimizers; it's like blaming the abused one for blackening the eye of her or his abuser.

The abuse has only continued after the verdict. The heavy police presence in Oakland includes numerous acts of brutality committed by police, as well as denying freedom of movement, and bullying and harassing protestors and people just walking down the streets. All this has stoked the anger of Oakland residents.

Nearly 80 people were arrested and many of the injured were denied medical treatment, were ridiculed by cops and subjected to taunts and more physical abuse.

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together believes that all the charges against the arrested should be dropped immediately and that they be compensated for their incarceration and injuries; Johannes Mehserle should be retried in Alameda County; and the Oakland police and any police agencies that took part in the actions of Jan. 7, 2009, and this July 8 should be investigated.

**Justice for Oscar Grant!**

**All power to the people! □**

## 'We are Oscar Grant'

# Protests hit racist verdict

*Continued from page 1*

the young man killed by the BART police, said he was too upset to go Los Angeles for the trial. He urged the crowd not to tear up Oakland.

One young man who spoke near the end of the rally said that he was asked by the rally organizers to warn about the "outside agitators" who might try to cause trouble. He pointed to the lines of armed police and stated, "Those are the only outside agitators that I see here today and yes, they will cause trouble!"

When the official rally ended at 8 p.m., several hundred protesters — a large multinational crowd of predominantly young people — stayed in the streets in downtown Oakland. A group of about 100 youth started to march down Broadway only to be stopped by a line of police at 11th Street.

As darkness set in, a small group of protesters smashed the windows of a Foot Locker store and liberated much of the merchandise inside. Some rocks and bottles were tossed at the police from the other end of Broadway.

Within a short period of time, the police declared the protest an unlawful assembly and swept down Broadway, indiscriminately knocking down demonstrators with batons and arresting people. Later into the night, concussion grenades (flash/bang) were heard and tear gas was fired at the remaining crowds.

By the end of the night, some 78 people had been arrested.

Most demonstrators were cited and released. However, a group of protesters are being held on felony charges. Several businesses, including Sears and local banks, were trashed.



Post-verdict protest in Los Angeles.

WWW PHOTOS: JOHN PARKER

The very next day, July 9, the local big-business-owned media carried banner headlines claiming that 75 percent of the demonstrators were anarchists and "outside agitators." Progressive organizations and individuals including the National Lawyers Guild spoke out against that charge.

Oakland attorney and Haiti Action Committee activist Walter Riley issued a public statement that read in part: "The murder of Oscar Grant is a universal is-

sue of justice and civil rights. I do not like this divisive campaign to divide our community by calling people outsiders. Calling people outsiders in this instance is a political attack on the movement."

In a July 9 article in California Beat by Tashina Manyak, Jevon Cochran, a 19-year-old student and member of the Black Student Union at Laney College, said he thought that what took place were "appropriate responses to the verdict." Cochran was there and participated in the

march that was stopped by the Oakland police. He noted that the businesses that were trashed were all part of major corporations and included several banks. He said that everyone at the protest in their own way was fighting for justice for Oscar Grant. He added that he hoped that Mehserle's judge got the message, too. "When we say 'no justice, no peace' we meant it," Cochran said. □



‘Making deals with the Devil’

# Attempt made to exclude Mumia case from death-penalty movement



By Betsey Piette

According to a recent exposé, a small group of U.S. death penalty abolitionist leaders tried to exclude the case of death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal from the Fourth World Congress Against the Death Penalty, held in March in Geneva, Switzerland.

In June, ThisCantBeHappening.net wrote that some U.S. abolitionists, led by Renny Cushing, executive director of Murder Victims’ Families for Human

Rights, walked out of the hall when a phone call from Abu-Jamal on Pennsylvania’s death row was being broadcast to the congress participants.

Unbeknownst at the time, Cushing and other U.S. members of the steering committee of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty had sent the French organizers of the World Congress a letter in December 2009 titled “Involvement of Mumia Abu-Jamal endangers the U.S. coalition for abolition of the death penalty,” in which they objected to having Abu-Jamal speak.

According to ThisCantBeHappening, the letter stated, “The Abu-Jamal case, regardless of its merits, acts as a lightning rod that galvanizes opponents of abolition and neutralizes key constituencies in the cause of abolition. Continuing to give Abu-Jamal focused attention unnecessarily attracts our strongest opponents and alienates coalition partners at a time when we need to build alliances, not foster hatred and enmity.”

Just who are the “coalition partners” that signers of this letter hope to “build

alliances” with?

The letter states that since the Fraternal Order of Police, an ultraconservative and staunchly pro-death penalty organization, advocates the execution of Abu-Jamal and all other prisoners convicted of killing police officers, anything done by the World Congress to aid Abu-Jamal’s cause would be “dangerously counterproductive to the abolition movement in the U.S.”

The letter concludes, “The support of law enforcement officials is essential to  
*Continued on page 11*

At USSF

# Black liberation assembly discusses theory & practice

By Dolores Cox  
Detroit

The growing war on Black people was the impetus for the Black Liberation People’s Movement Assembly, held at the 2010 U.S. Social Forum in Detroit on June 24. The status and nature of the liberation movement and the move from theory to practice were part of the discussion.

In a packed room, participants from around the country dialogued to both create and share power towards rebuilding the Black movement. The host of the assembly was the Black Left Unity Network, which has also been actively engaged in the reparations movement for descendants of enslaved Africans and the demand for African-American self-determination.

The meeting gave priority to deepening the unity process in order to rebuild the movement. The struggle of African Americans for true democracy, liberation and revolutionary change was viewed as a part of a worldwide struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Participants discussed how to better organize and mobilize mass-based power toward achieving self-determination and altering the balance of power. Solutions

were explored to formulate a national framework that unites and aligns Black liberation forces with others in anti-imperialist movements in the U.S.

It was stressed that increased unity is essential, as no single Black organization is capable of mobilizing and recruiting the masses for building the power needed to wage an effective resistance to institutional and systemic racism and national oppression. The need for Black people to expand their rights in their own interest was emphasized.

The fragmentation of the movement, due to internal and external forces, was acknowledged. There was a sentiment that the existence, within the Black liberation movement, of different ideologies and approaches to achieving revolutionary power will have to be replaced by a more frank, honest, nonsectarian and active struggle, a common unity program, and a commitment to the struggle of the Black working class.

A more concerted effort to develop class consciousness was agreed upon. The danger of allowing the system to deliberately divide and conquer, having folks fighting over crumbs and resulting in unnecessary tensions and conflicts, was emphasized. It

was agreed that much more strategizing is therefore necessary to build solidarity and alliances with other oppressed peoples and their struggles here and abroad. It was stated that immigrants are not responsible for the employment situation of African Americans.

The essential need for the inclusion of Black women in the liberation struggle was also mentioned, as women and children are the most affected by capitalism’s violence. The increase in women prisoners was noted as another important concern, as well as the need to give more attention to the issue of Black youth unemployment. Youth must be involved and informed about revolutionary politics.

Each panel member reiterated how critical the concerns of Black people are. African Americans have historically been, and continue to be one of the most exploited groups in the country, disproportionately bearing the brunt of the capitalist economic crisis. Therefore, it was stated that the Black working class must be strengthened and be at the vanguard of leadership in shaping demands, tactics and strategies that clarify the movement’s transformative revolutionary perspective.

Workers have to also rebuild and reorganize the trade union movement in the workplace, as well as see the big picture regarding what’s impacting their communities. An organizational network outside the Democratic Party must be formed in the process, since attacks on African Americans are increasing in this so-called “post-racial” society.

Blacks need to become independent domestically and internationally, it was stressed, and move from a position of weakness to a position of strength. Achieving power toward self determination and revolutionary change therefore requires increased efforts to analyze and challenge the racist capitalist and imperialist system in the U.S.

The issue of human rights — freedom, education, housing, jobs and decent wages, equal justice and protection under the law — was mentioned throughout the assembly. Fighting ruling-class power was stated as a continuing need. And the necessity of dismantling world capitalism was evidenced. Consensus was reached that folks need to know that a different society is an absolute necessity for the possibility of a better world.

All power to the people! □

By Sharon Danann  
Cleveland

Shirley Qahhar, a long-time community activist, passed away on June 9 in Cleveland.

Bert Jennings of the Carl Stokes Brigade, a militant Cleveland group, told Workers World, “Shirley was an ardent opponent of the mistreatment of poor people, dedicated to working for solutions in the communities. She will be sorely missed.”

Shirley Jean Smith was raised in St. Louis where she was propelled into activism when police shot and killed an 80-year-old woman whom they were in the process of evicting. She became a leader in the St. Louis chapter of the National Organization for Women and a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

The activist moved to Louisville, Ky., where she represented the SWP and Louisville NOW in the Anti-Klan Coalition, which was being formed by Abdul Qahhar, then a leader of the Black Panther Party. The coalition included the Communist Party, the Reparations Party, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the NAACP and other local organizations.

Brother Qahhar told this writer: “The Anti-Klan Coalition held the biggest rally

# SHIRLEY QAHHAR

## ‘Even in her death, she was organizing’

Louisville had seen to that point [with] 500-600 people. The white supremacists were preparing for war. The rally was held in the Labor Temple, a union hall, and racist white workers were outside picketing the building. A comment had been made about insufficient government funds. Shirley got up and said the funds were not insufficient for the war abroad. The Louisville paper quoted her. She was always at the forefront, always leading.”

After Shirley and Abdul Qahhar got married in a Muslim ceremony in September 1976, she returned to her job at a DuPont factory. She was the only woman and sole African-American worker in a chemical loading-and-unloading department where she faced relentless harassment.

Upon returning to work, she found that her name was written as “Shirley Khomeini.” When she asked her union’s Human Rights Committee for support, she was told, “We can’t believe you waited this long.” The Anti-Klan Coalition showed solidarity with the Qahhars by protesting this racist, anti-Muslim attack.

Shirley Qahhar also launched the Black Market Bookstore in Louisville. Its slogan was “Read — it ain’t illegal yet.”

In 1987 the Qahhars moved to Cleveland where Shirley wrote articles for the East Side News, a progressive newspaper. One important article was her interview with Susan Robeson, granddaughter of Paul Robeson.

The activist won the Journalist of the Year award in 1990 for her article on Arnold Feckner, a drug dealer whom the police were paying to supply the Morris Black housing project with cocaine. Her exposé blew the case wide open and led to widespread protests. Feckner was convicted, but a pro-police judge acquitted the cops.

On June 18 Shirley Qahhar’s funeral (janazah) harmoniously brought together people from many perspectives, who offered prayers, poetry, songs, stories and loving wishes. Abdul Qahhar’s son, Ibrahim, who led the service, commented that “even in her death, she was organizing.”

Khalid Samad of Peace in the Hood, a youth-oriented community group, told of Shirley Qahhar’s tireless organizing for a



conference on the African Holocaust held in Cleveland 20 years ago. Although the conference focused on the question of “Who are we?,” Samad said that she refocused the discussion by asking, “What are we going to do?”

Art McKoy, founder of Black on Black Crime Inc., a Cleveland activist organization, said that he gave Shirley Qahhar the nickname “the bodyguard,” as she was known for her perception and quick thinking.

Her spouse and comrade Abdul Qahhar said that, although he is officially the chairperson of the Cleveland chapter of the New Black Panther Party, Shirley was the real chairperson, in that she would let him know if his statements were on the mark or not.

After the funeral, he told this writer that, “The service expressed all that she was — her communalism, socialism, communism, Black Nationalism, Islam and pro-humanity.” Moreover, he said, “When you live as a revolutionary, you die a revolutionary.” □



# State repression awakens worker resistance in Panama

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Panama’s right-wing government of President Roberto Martinelli is ending its first year in office by passing reactionary anti-labor laws on behalf of the oligarchy and transnational corporations and killing six Indigenous protesters. The Panamanian working class is resisting with a July 13 general strike.

Martinelli’s regime is allied with the criminal, paramilitary administration of Álvaro Uribe in Colombia. It has opened 11 air bases to the U.S. military under the pretext of combating drug trafficking, but they are in fact poised against its progressive neighbors to the south.

On July 1 a law took effect increasing taxes on goods and services from 5 percent to 7 percent. This hits poor families hardest in a country where the neoliberal policies of this and past administrations have increased unemployment, underemployment and poverty.

On June 16 Martinelli imposed Law 30, commonly known in Panama as “Ley Chorizo” (sausage law), which alters three codes and six national laws. Using the pretext of improving commercial air transportation, this law destroys unions, prohibits strikes, facilitates the destruction of the environment, and threatens civil rights by allowing total impunity for police actions.

To pass this law without public scrutiny, the National Assembly held three days of extraordinary meetings — behind closed doors — with no public hearing and guarded by the National Police.

Martinelli said, “The laws passed will impact and have great repercussion on national life.” He admitted that if the bill had been debated publicly, “it is probable that many of the articles of Law 30 would not have passed.” (rebanadasderealidad.com.ar/)

In anticipation of resistance, in April

## WW interviews union leader

Martinelli enacted the “Ley Carcelazo” (jailhouse law), which mandates arrest and jail terms for protesters who close or blockade streets.

As June ended, outraged workers resisted with several protests. Unions issued a call for the July 13 general strike and joined other organizations to challenge Law 30 with at least two lawsuits demanding its repeal.

### Indigenous people lead resistance

In Changuinola, a district of the Bocas del Toro province on the northern Atlantic coast of Panama, the mostly Ngäbe Bukle Indigenous people gave the Panamanian working class a lesson in struggle. This region’s inhabitants are mostly Native people.

Changuinola is the home of banana production, which provides 50 percent to 60 percent of the jobs. But it is also one of the poorest regions in Panama. According to a Panamanian state study, the Indigenous regions in the country suffer from 96.3 percent poverty. (telemetro.com)

More than 5,000 workers from the Bocas Fruit Company, a Chiquita company, began a 48-hour work stoppage on July 2. The company had quickly used Law 30 to eliminate union dues and thereby eliminate the union’s financial base.

The workers, represented by the SITRAIBANA union, were principally demanding repeal of Law 30 and that the company reestablish union dues. They were also protesting Martinelli’s recent changes to the Charter that permit the violation of Indigenous labor, environmental, cultural and social rights.

Lacking a response from the company and the national government, the workers on the second day declared the strike

would last indefinitely. Since then, other banana workers have joined the strike. The community supports the strike and the whole region has been paralyzed. Parents have not sent their children to school. Other Indigenous people have come to Changuinola in support of their sister and brother workers.

The state responded with repression, sending thousands of armed riot police to squash the resistance. The workers replied by blockading all roads leading to the region. They set offices on fire, including the Global Bank branch and the headquarters of the police for minors, capturing four police for several hours. Workers also seized the Changuinola airport and answered police fire with rocks and sticks.

Unions say that six people were killed; the government reports only two deaths. Hundreds were injured, dozens shot in the eye with pellets. The injured had to be taken to hospitals in Panama City.

At the same time, 1,200 workers who had been widening the Panama Canal also went on strike, demanding better working conditions.

As these actions unfolded, the regime opened a campaign of repression, arresting hundreds of workers and activists.

### WW interviews union leader

On the eve of the general strike, Workers World spoke with Alejandro John, general secretary of the union that represents the workers of Coca-Cola and other beverage companies. John is also on the board of Unity in the Integral Struggle for the People (ULIP) and is part of the Council of Organized Workers, one of the broad workers’ federations in Panama.

John summarized the general situation as of July 12: “I am very worried

because there is a police state and state terrorism. The government has charged several union leaders. Many have been arrested during this weekend, including a professor from the University of Panama, Prof. Juan Jovane. [Police] tried to take him out of his home yesterday and arrest him. It was a man in civil clothing without identifying himself as police. There might be more than a dozen union leaders arrested. Some had to go underground for fear of being arrested without cause.”

This worry, however, has not in any way diminished the will to struggle and the preparations for the general strike. John continued: “The general strike is still on, more important now because of the repression in the Changuinola. We are not going back.

“The strike tomorrow is a way to clearly let the state know that we disagree with their behavior. They are not trying to negotiate, to try to find a solution. Instead, the state is shooting at the demonstrators, a brutal repression. This reinforces the solidarity with the comrades from Changuinola.”

WW learned that there was some kind of last-minute settlement in the banana strike in Changuinola, postponing for 90 days Law 30. We asked John what this meant, who made the agreement, and how the people were responding.

John reported: “There has been a postponement of Law 30 for 90 days but only on the labor aspects of it. But our position in ULIP, the Coca-Cola union, and others [is that] we are demanding the complete repeal of the total law L30, not only the postponement of the labor aspects of it. Besides, the president and the banana workers reached an agreement that does not include the repeal of the L30 and that has created a dissatisfaction in the region. Apparently they have blockaded the roads again sporadically in the Bocas del Toro province.

“The situation in Bocas del Toro now is unstable. There is no certainty that the strike has been lifted and that the workers have returned to their jobs. Things are not clear since today is the first day that the agreement has been known. However, what is a certainty is that there are at least 20 victims who have been seriously injured, particularly eye injuries, and they had to be transferred to a hospital in Panama City.”

John added: “I do not think this situation will have an easy solution, in spite of some accords. This situation has not been solved, in the region [Changuinola] or for the rest of the workers in the rest of the country.”

Alejandro John finished with an appeal to the workers and unions in the U.S.: “We want your solidarity, and above all that the Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Panama not be ratified, because union freedom, freedom of association and individual rights are under attack in our country. We need that your unions question our government about these issues, that union freedom be respected in Panama.”

Email: [bjceci@workers.org](mailto:bjceci@workers.org)

# Caravan challenges blockade of Cuba

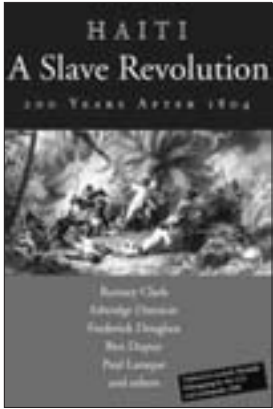
This year marks the 20th anniversary of the annual U.S.-Cuba Friendship Caravan, sponsored by IFCO/Pastors for Peace. For two decades, the caravan has been challenging the criminal U.S. blockade of Cuba. The Caravan travels throughout the U.S. and Canada every year collecting supplies and equipment for the Cuban people. The drivers stop in dozens of cities to educate the U.S. public about the effects of the blockade.

Pictured here are two volunteers in Queens, N.Y., who helped to load medical equipment into Caravan vehicles. The Caravan has brought thousands of volunteers and tons of humanitarian aid to Cuba over the years as part of a direct challenge to the blockade.

— Julie Fry



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN



## HAITI: A Slave Revolution 200 Years after 1804

New release to include Aristide’s kidnapping by the U.S. & the 2010 earthquake.

First published in 2004 as a joint project of the International Action Center and the Haiti Support Network. This is not a traditional history book or textbook, but a people’s history. In the preface the editors state: “This book is going to combat 200 years of racist indoctrination and propaganda about the Haitian Revolution. Available at [Leftbooks.com](http://Leftbooks.com)



A remarkable book now on the press. Look for it in coming weeks at [www.Leftbooks.com](http://www.Leftbooks.com).

### ‘What is Marxism all about?’

This pocket-sized book is a collaborative work by Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — FIST. Read it for an analysis of the capitalist economic crisis that’s hit working and oppressed people, including students and youth. This guide for activists devotes chapters to Marxist terms like “imperialism,” “self-determination” and “socialism” and explains them with a working-class perspective and clever illustrations.



# As African Americans move in

# Racist death threats hit Detroit suburb

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
**Editor, Pan-African News Wire**  
**Eastpointe, Mich.**

On July 6 in the suburb of Eastpointe, located right outside Detroit, 17 mainly African-American households received a duplicate handwritten letter demanding that they move out of the city or face death. The community has been undergoing a rapid demographic shift, with at least 20 African-American families moving onto Sprenger Avenue over the last several months.

Two days later, one of the residents, whose address had been noted in the racist diatribe, fell victim to a break-in and the setting of fires in two separate rooms of the house. The resident’s sister happened to go by the home to meet the landlord. When the door was opened, smoke billowed out.

After the fire department and police were summoned, an investigation revealed that the blazes were deliberately set. A resident of Sprenger Avenue who wished to remain anonymous told Workers World that if the sister of the occupant had not arrived, the entire residence could have been severely damaged.

Nevertheless, the local police and fire departments, along with the FBI — all of whom have been involved in the investigations surrounding the racist letters and the fire — have been reluctant to label the attack as arson. Residents of the area think otherwise.

An African American who has lived on the avenue for nearly two years told Workers World that between 20 and 25 African-American families had moved there just over the last two months. Also, when police arrived at the home where the arson attack took place, the person who rents the house was placed in a police car and questioned for two hours, as if he was a suspect in the fire.

“The man was eventually released because there was nothing they could hold him for in regard to the fire. I received the racist letter and was deeply disturbed by the language, which referred to African Americans in derogatory terms and

threatened us with death if we did not move on the other side of Eight Mile Road,” the resident said, referring to the boundary with Detroit.

On July 11, Robert Robinson II, a Detroit resident with relatives on Strenger Avenue in Eastpointe, called for people of all races to gather in the area to express their outrage at these racist provocations. Robinson called into the “Fighting for Justice” radio program and has made appeals on Facebook for people throughout the region to support the African-American residents of Eastpointe.

“I do not live in Eastpointe,” Robinson told Workers World, “but my cousin stays on this street and I am going to do everything possible to make sure that she is not harmed.” Robinson also talked to reporters from the local affiliates of Fox and ABC News about the atmosphere prevailing in the neighborhood: “People are afraid to come out because they feel threatened. They do not know who is really behind these incidents.”

Imara Scott, who lives on another street in Eastpointe and moved into the suburb less than a year ago, said people should not be intimidated by the threats

and should make it clear that they have no intentions of leaving.

“Ignorance is still alive and well,” Scott said. “It could be an individual or an organization. What bothers me is that this is being done in secret.”

A white woman who lives on the avenue came out to express her solidarity with the African-American residents. She brought cold drinks for people standing outside the firebombed home in near-90-degree weather.

She said, “My kids are Latino. We are a diverse and peaceful community. The mayor of Eastpointe has not been out here. It’s hard economic times and everyone is hurting.”

Police and FBI agents have confiscated some of the letters from the residents. One resident said she immediately turned over her letter to the FBI, which has refused to return it. “I should have made a copy for myself,” she said.

Law-enforcement officials say that they are going to take the letters to the Michigan State Police Crime Lab for possible fingerprint and DNA evidence that could lead to identifying who is responsible for the attacks.

### From East Detroit to Eastpointe

The city of Eastpointe was settled during the 1830s by German and Irish immigrants. In 1929, the city was incorporated as East Detroit. However, in 1992, through a vote, the residents chose to rename the suburb Eastpointe in a politically motivated attempt to avoid any association with the majority African-American city of Detroit.

Placing “pointe” at the end of the name presumably sought to identify this mainly working class white community with the more affluent Grosse Pointe, which also borders the east side of Detroit. In recent years more young African-American families have moved into the area. Many people in Detroit view Eastpointe as hostile, with numerous complaints about random stops of African-American motorists by local police.

Residents of Sprenger Avenue say they will establish a neighborhood watch group to monitor the area in light of the racist threats and attacks. Also they are planning to take their concerns to the local City Council to demand that these acts of racism be taken seriously by the local authorities. □

# Protest targets Netanyahu & blockade of Gaza

San Francisco — Several hundred people picketed in front of the Israeli Consulate here on July 6 to protest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s meeting in Washington with President Barack Obama. Loud chants of “Long Live Palestine!” and “We don’t care what you say, Intifada all the way!” easily drowned out a small group of pro-Israel counterpickets across the street.

Several speakers at the rush hour rally demanded that the current Israeli blockade of Gaza be lifted completely and immediately.

Dr. Henry Clark, a leader of the West County Toxics Coalition based in Richmond, exposed the colonial role of Israel in the Middle East. “Israel stole the land from the Palestinian people,” Clark said. He looked across the street at the consulate and added, “You need to get out of occupied Palestine.”

Today’s protest, organized by the Answer Coalition and endorsed by a broad group of organizations, including the International Action Center, coincided with a number of demonstrations protesting Netanyahu’s visit, including one in Washington, D.C.

— Report and photo by Judy Greenspan



# Israeli military veteran in Warsaw: ‘Liberate all ghettos’

By **Michael Kramer**

An Israeli military veteran, with help from Polish activists from the Palestine solidarity organization Kampania Palestyna, on June 27 tagged a remnant of the wall that surrounded the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw with “Liberate All Ghettos” in Hebrew and “Free Gaza and Palestine” in English. A Palestinian flag was hung from the top of the wall after the tagging was completed.

The wall was built in 1940 when Poland was occupied by German fascists who were known as Nazis. Hundreds of thousands of Jews, as well as smaller numbers of Romani people, were imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto before they were transported to the Auschwitz and Treblinka extermination camps. In April 1943 a heroic armed uprising began in the ghetto and lasted for one month before being put down by the German army. The ghetto was then completely leveled, yet some fighters were able to hold out for months in underground bunkers.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is an important event for all oppressed people, including the Palestinians.

Yonatan Shapira was a captain in the Israeli Air Force. He flew U.S.-made Black

Hawk helicopters in the same unit that was to take part in the May 2010 attack on the Gaza Flotilla ship Mavi Marmara in international waters.

In 2003 Shapira wrote a letter refusing to take part in missions targeting Palestinians. It was co-signed by 27 other Israeli pilots. That was the end of his military career. Since then he has become a well-known activist who supports Palestinian self-determination.

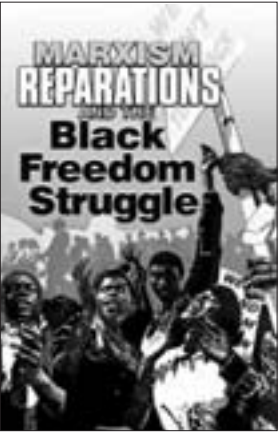
He is also a strong supporter of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and a co-founder of Combatants for Peace, an organization of former Palestinian and Israeli armed combatants.

In a video interview Shapira described his background and motivation: “Most of my family came from Poland and many of my relatives were killed in the death camps during the Holocaust. When I walk in what was left from the Warsaw Ghetto, I can’t stop thinking about the people of Gaza who are not only locked in an open-air prison but are also being bombarded by fighter jets, attack helicopters and drones, flown by people I used to serve with before my refusal in 2003. ...

“I was always taught growing up that the atrocities that happened to the Jewish people happened because the world was silent. And therefore I cannot be si-

lent. The Jewish people needed to be liberated from the ghettos, and now Israelis need to be liberated from the crimes of their own government. Each of us can take part in this global struggle for justice and support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement for the sake of not just the Palestinian people but for Israelis, too.” (www.kampania-palestyna)

Shapira is not alone. Ewa Jasiewicz, a Pole who participated in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, says, “Poland is full of the ruins of ghettos and death camps and shrines to those who sacrificed their lives in the defense of not just their communities but in resistance to fascism.” □



## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

**Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination** Larry Holmes

**Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery** Sam Marcy

**Black Youth: Repression & Resistance** LeiLani Dowell

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**The Struggle for Socialism Is Key** Monica Moorehead  
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**Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping and Segregation** Consuela Lee

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**Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? 40th Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion** John Parker

**Racism and Poverty in the Delta** Larry Hales

**Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions** Pat Chin

Available at **Leftbooks.com**



# Rogue troops? Rogue war!

Suddenly this July 13 the British media was filled with stories of an Afghan soldier or soldiers who opened fire on Britain’s Gurkha Rifles, killing three, two of them British nationals. Given the increase in NATO forces in Afghanistan with more combat, and especially with more U.S. troops in battle, there will undoubtedly be more such incidents in the coming months involving U.S. as well as other NATO troops.

The British and U.S. corporate media consistently referred to the Afghan or Afghans involved as “rogue” or “renegade” troops. These words distort completely what happened and can only mislead readers if they are not replaced.

Not that we, at this time, know the motives of the individual Afghans who carried out the attack. We do know that U.S. planes had just bombed and killed five allied Afghan troops. This “friendly fire” happens frequently. Perhaps the “friendly fire” was returned.

We know that U.S. planes and troops have killed thousands of Afghan civilians. The Pentagon calls this “collateral damage.” One war opponent has called it “collateral murder.” Perhaps the Afghan was avenging some of his civilian relatives.

Then there is the third possibility, that the Afghan involved is a patriot. He was fed up with Britain and the U.S. and Germany and the Netherlands and anyone else occupying his country. He grabbed some pay and got some military training. And then he blew the hell out of the occupation forces and ran to the resistance.

For the vast majority of Afghans, that is, those not part of the puppet regime of Hamid Karzai, it is the troops that remain loyal to the NATO allies that are the “renegades” and “rogues.” Those who revolt and join the resistance are patriots or heroes.

Once the above is understood, it is clear that the only way to minimize the outrageously high human and material costs of the war in Afghanistan — not to mention neighboring Pakistan and nearby Iraq — is to get all NATO and all U.S. troops out.

There are some opportunities for people in the U.S. to get active and mobilize to do just that.

The National Conference to Bring the Troops Home Now! will meet July 23-25 in Albany, N.Y., to discuss an action program to plan demonstrations demanding immediate and unconditional withdrawal of troops from that region.

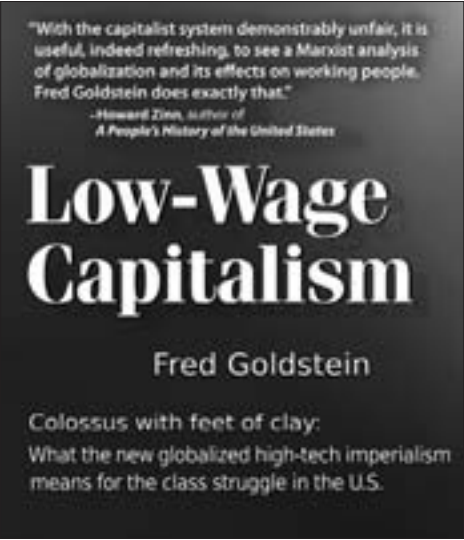
Make sure that plank of the program is adopted and that the mobilization goes forward.

UAW President Bob King and Rev. Jesse Jackson have announced a march for “Jobs, Justice and Peace” for Aug. 28 in Detroit, the epicenter of the depression.

Make sure an immediate end to the Afghanistan invasion stays up front as you build this very progressive action. □

“In this period of economic uncertainty, Fred Goldstein’s *Low-Wage Capitalism* could not be better timed. Beautifully written, deeply considered and backed by impressive research, this is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the true nature of the world we live in and the factors that have led to so much turmoil. . . . Urgently recommended.”

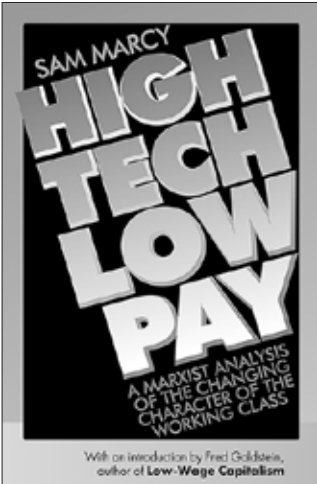
**Gregory Elich,**  
Author of *Strange Liberators*



An easy-to-read analysis of the roots of the current global economic crisis, its implications for workers and oppressed peoples, and the strategy needed for future struggle.

Paperback, 336 pages. Includes graphs, charts, bibliography, endnotes and index.

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Twenty years ago Sam Marcy wrote that the scientific-technological revolution is accelerating a shift to lower-paying jobs and to more women, Black and Latino/a workers. Using Marxism as a living tool he analyzes the trends and offers strategies for labor including the occupation of plants.

A new introduction by Fred Goldstein explains the roots of the current economic crisis, with its disastrous unemployment, that has heightened the need for a working-class resurgence.

# Support the Freedom Party!

By Stephen Millies

The memory of Fannie Lou Hamer is inspiring Black and Latino/a activists throughout New York state to build the new Freedom Party.

The party is running New York City Councilperson Charles Barron for governor, Buffalo educator and historian Eva Doyle for lieutenant governor, and Bronx activist Ramon Jimenez for attorney general.

“We are asserting our right to self-determination, our right to continue the history of that great woman — Fannie Lou Hamer — who was beaten to a pulp trying to get some parity and inclusion for Black people in the Democratic Party,” declared Barron at a June 17 news conference held at Sistas’ Place in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant community. There, he announced the forming of the Freedom Party and kicked off its election campaign.

Fannie Lou Hamer formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 to fight the state’s Ku Klux Klan-dominated Democratic Party. She received constant death threats and was nearly killed for demanding the right to vote.

Hamer protested the seating of an all-white Mississippi delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. The delegates included sheriffs who had tortured civil rights activists.

That great white liberal Hubert Humphrey insultingly offered the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party two nonvoting seats. Hamer turned him down. Humphrey then became Lyndon Johnson’s vice president and top salesperson for the Vietnam War.

Forty-six years later, New York’s Democratic Party is running an all-white slate of candidates. Yet the state has 3 million African-American residents, as well as 3 million Latinos/as, 1 million Asian Americans, and more than 50,000 Native people whose land was stolen.

The state’s Democratic Party dumped Gov. David Paterson — one of only four Black governors in U.S. history — to make way for state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo to run as their gubernatorial candidate.

Cuomo’s main qualification for governor is being the son of three-term Gov. Mario Cuomo. As Barron pointed out, Mario Cuomo built more prisons than had any governor in New York history.

Andrew Cuomo picked Rochester mayor and former police chief Robert Duffy as his running mate. Duffy’s “zero-tolerance” arrest policy targeted African-American and Latino/a people. Cuomo’s selection of Duffy for lieutenant governor is a blatant appeal to the white racist vote. It’s a slap in the face to people of color.

## Why the wealthy hate Charles Barron

Charles Barron joined the Black Panther Party’s Harlem chapter in 1969, the same year Mumia Abu-Jamal helped found the Panther chapter in Philadelphia.

Barron represents the East New York section of Brooklyn, one of the poorest sections in the city. He fights for poor people all over the earth.

Barron has spoken countless times at anti-war demonstrations. He’s spoken at immigrant rights’ rallies, including the huge May 1, 2006, rally in New York City’s Union Square. Barron is at the forefront of the movement for reparations for African-American people.

In 2009 Barron helped lead the Viva Palestina caravan that brought aid to the Gaza Ghetto. He spoke at Brooklyn’s House of the Lord Church on June 17 in defense of the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza that Israeli pirates murderously attacked.

Democratic Party mouthpieces, including New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, denounced the June 17 rally, which was held in a Black church, and demanded an investigation of its speakers.

In 2006 Quinn rearranged the seating of the City Council so that Barron would have to sit under a statue of slave owner and rapist Thom-

as Jefferson. In addition, in 2009, she removed Barron as the chair of the Higher Education Committee.

Billionaires have never forgiven Charles Barron for inviting Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe to City Hall in 2002. Mugabe helped liberate Zimbabwe and has turned over thousands of white-owned farms to Black people. That should have happened in the U.S. following the Civil War.

## Barron’s slate: fighters for the oppressed

Eva Doyle is well known in Buffalo, N.Y., as an outstanding teacher who fought for the inclusion of African-American history in the school curriculum. Since 1979 she’s written the “Eye on History” newspaper column, now in the Black Criterion, the oldest Black newspaper in western New York.

Ramon Jimenez grew up across the street from Malcolm X’s home in East Elmhurst, Queens. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Jimenez has fought for tenants in the South Bronx and was arrested for demanding that Hostos College — the only bilingual college in the U.S. — be kept open. Jimenez is currently defending Black and Latino/a workers at Woodlawn Cemetery who’ve had racist epithets hurled at them by management.

Barron, Doyle and Jimenez spoke at a July 11 rally held at Siloam Presbyterian Church in Bedford-Stuyvesant. So did Assemblywoman Inez Barron, life-partner of Charles Barron; Viola Plummer of the December 12th Movement; and “Attorney-at-War” Alton Maddox, who for 20 years has been suspended from practicing law because of his courageous defense of Tawana Brawley. (In 1987 Brawley, who is African American and was then 15 years old, charged that six white men, including police officers, had raped her. The racist establishment media and New York state officials came down hard on her and her family and punished her attorneys.)

Mario Cuomo was governor of New York state when the cover-up of Brawley’s rape took place. In 2007 Brawley’s family asked state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo to reopen the case and unseal the files. Nothing has been heard since.

## Put Freedom Party on the ballot

Simple justice demands that every activist should support the Freedom Party. The Democratic Party’s all-white slate is a capitulation to the Tea Party bigots.

By running an African-American man, an African-American woman and a Puerto Rican man on its ticket, the Freedom Party stands for equality. It reaffirms the “Great Alliance” of the Latino/a and Black communities that built the Local 1199 hospital workers’ union (now affiliated with the Service Employees) and won “open admissions” at the City University of New York.

The Freedom Party is a break from the imperialist Democratic Party that politically strangles poor and working people. Top labor leaders avoid any real struggle against unemployment by pouring union money into Democratic congressional candidate coffers.

## Freedom Party stands for struggle

“We’re the only party that’s going to raise police terror,” declared Barron at the July 11 rally. He asked how the cops could justify firing 50 shots at Sean Bell and 41 shots at Amadou Diallo, killing both unarmed men.

Barron called for freeing all political prisoners. He demanded reparations for African Americans and the right of Black people to return to New Orleans. He denounced the idea of any budget cutbacks since Wall Street made \$61 billion in profits last year.

The Freedom Party needs 15,000 signatures just to get on the ballot. Because of technical requirements, it actually needs at least double that amount. The campaign needs volunteers and donations.

Contact the Freedom Party at 347-636-3660 to see how you can help. □



# After 50 years

# Congo still struggles for real independence

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Five decades after the independence of the former Belgian Congo, the genuine emancipation of this Central African state is yet to be realized. Nonetheless, the survival of this state — which has been under assault since 1960 when Patrice Lumumba took charge of the country as prime minister representing the Congolese National Movement (MNC) — is a testament to the resilience and fortitude of the people.

At this year’s independence celebrations, several world leaders, including United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, were in attendance. The Democratic Republic of Congo national army put on a parade and display of military equipment that involved 15,000 troops.

The DRC is one of the most mineral-rich states in the world. It has been estimated that the Congo has 30 percent of the planet’s cobalt reserves and 10 percent of the copper.

However, despite the tremendous economic potential of this nation, the majority of its people remain poor, living off barely more than one dollar a day. The wealth in mineral resources has always made the territory a coveted area for Western imperialism and its agents, who have taken enormous natural and human resources from the Congolese people.

Beginning in 1876 Belgian monarch King Leopold II established the territory as the “Congo Free State” and administered it as his own personal property. A vicious system of plantation agriculture enslaved Africans to work in rubber extraction; 8 million died in order to create a wealthy ruling class in Belgium.

The consciousness of the Congolese people and the world community eventually led to the dismantling of this form of colonial oppression in favor of a more classical arrangement, with control being formally placed under Belgian governmental rule. Even with these changes, the African people remained the source of slave labor for the Europeans.

At the time of independence there were extreme shortages of skilled personnel within civilian life as well as the police services, where Africans served as subordinate workers to the Belgian officers. The rise of a nationalist movement during the 1950s, of which the Congolese National Movement under Patrice Lumumba was the most progressive, provided hope to the masses of people.

Lumumba attended the first All-African People’s Conference held in Accra, Ghana, in December 1958 and became known as the leading figure in the independence struggle inside the country. In January 1959, the Congolese people erupted in a national rebellion, forcing

the Belgian colonialists to eventually negotiate a transfer of power after an election that was scheduled for May 1960.

The MNC faction led by Lumumba received the most widespread support on a national level. Lumumba was made prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu of ABAKO, an ethnically-based political party, was placed in office as president. Lumumba’s determination to utilize the mineral wealth of the country for the people’s interests and his commitment to a pan-African and anti-imperialist domestic and foreign policy made him a target for both the Belgian colonialists and world imperialism, dominated by the U.S. ruling class.

The voice and political will of revolutionaries in Africa remained with Lumumba’s MNC. When in the aftermath of the independence of the Congolese state, the Belgians refused to leave the country and prompted a mutiny within the police and the secession of the southern mineral-rich region of Katanga, Ghana was one of the first countries to condemn the Western machinations aimed at this newly independent state.

On July 12 a high-level delegation from Ghana traveled to the Congo capital of Leopoldville at the behest of President Kwame Nkrumah. By this time not only Belgium but also the United States was carrying out the plot to overthrow Lumumba. The U.N. Security Council passed a resolution on July 14, 1960, requesting that Belgium withdraw its forces from Congo, but when the international peacekeeping force arrived in this Central African state it was working in conjunction with U.S. and European imperialism to ensure that the country would remain within the Western sphere of influence.

Lumumba had appealed directly to Nkrumah for the support of his government and military to aid the Congolese state. Nkrumah sent in Ghanaian troops as part of the U.N. peacekeeping mission. As a result of Ghana’s troops being within the U.N. force and the leadership of its military being under the command of Maj. Gen. H.T. Alexander, a British officer inherited from the colonial period, the Ghanaian troops did not play the role that either Lumumba or Nkrumah desired.

Alexander was eventually terminated by Nkrumah, but it was too late to avoid the coup against Lumumba, his kidnapping and eventual assassination. Mobutu Sese Seko and Moise Tshombe were made the dominant political figures in the country. After Tshombe died in an Algerian prison, Mobutu had free rein to aid in the assistance of the plunder of the country until 1997, when he was finally deposed by a coalition of national and pan-African forces.

### Civil war and the return of the U.N. (1998-2010)

After the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997, the conflicts within Rwanda and Uganda provided the rationale for the ongoing imperialist intervention in the DRC. Fearing a genuinely independent and united Congo, Washington backed both Uganda and Rwanda’s invasion of the eastern DRC in August 1998.

This aggressive military action by these two states bankrolled and trained by U.S. imperialists prompted the intervention of Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia on the side of the Laurent Kabila government of the DRC. This intervention by the revolutionary states of the Southern African Development Community, led by Zimbabwe, beat back the imperialist plot to seize the Congo.

A settlement ended the fighting in 2003. Then the effort at the balkanization of the Congo was carried on through the use of rebel gangs that served as surrogates for the multinational mining interests that continued to loot the country of its natural resources. United Nations Mission to Congo forces replaced the pro-imperialist armies from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, as well as the pro-Congo Zimbabwean, Angolan and Namibian military forces.

Just as the imperialists utilized the United Nations in 1960-61 to undermine the liberation of Congo, the presence of MONUC [the current U.N. military mission in the DRC] over the last several years has not brought peace and security to this area today. Consequently, the Joseph Kabila government has asked MONUC to begin to withdraw from the DRC. An agreement during late 2008 to conduct joint monitoring operations with the imperialist proxy states of Rwanda and Uganda to clear out rebel forces from these neighboring countries has still not created the conditions for real and lasting stability.

### Imperialism continues its stranglehold

The imperialist states also oppose any effort to foster relief from conflict and international debt. Leading up to the 50th anniversary of national independence, the Canadian government, defending its mining interests, openly rejected efforts to write off debts claimed by the industrial states against the DRC. “Despite [Congo’s] poverty, the Canadian government has been lobbying the World Bank and IMF not to forgive any of DRC debt until the country ends a legal dispute with First Quantum, a Canadian mining company with lucrative Congolese concessions.” (Al-Jazeera, June 30)

“Canada blocked an \$8 billion debt relief deal for the Democratic Republic of Congo in a dispute over mining rights, depriving the African nation of a chance to mark the 50th anniversary of its independence on Wednesday with the accord.” (Reuters, June 30)

This same article points out that “a World Bank decision on the debt was postponed at Canada’s request due to a legal dispute that exploded last year between Vancouver-based First Quantum Minerals and the Kinshasha government over mining rights. The accord, which could have slashed Congo’s annual debt service burden to \$194 million from \$920 million, was to have been a high point of [anniversary] events.”

The only real solution for the Congolese people and Africa as a whole is to break with imperialism and move toward the economic and political integration of the continent. An article published in the Nkrumaist Ghana Evening News on July 14, 1960, entitled “Africa Will Resist Imperialist Aggression,” sums up the role of Western states in the post-colonial period.

The article states, “Imperialists have diverse ways of perpetuating colonialism. With the farewell of political imperialism, economic colonialism is the next phase that has to be attacked but, as it is, this next phase is trying its hands on African fertile soil. ... Political colonialism is going back to one of the original methods of enslaving Africans in the form of playing the part of the ‘good Samaritan’ in extending protection to Africans. Everyone is aware that the so-called protection for Africans means political and economic exploitation of Africans.” □

## Attempt made to exclude Mumia case from death-penalty movement

*Continued from page 7*

achieving abolition in the United States. It is essential to the national abolition strategy of U.S. abolition activists and attorneys that we cultivate the voices of police, prosecutors and law enforcement experts to support our call for an end to the death penalty.”

The letter was signed by Elizabeth Zitrin with Death Penalty Focus, Renny Cushing and Kate Lowenstein of the MVFHR, Speedy Rice of the National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys, Kritsin Houle of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and Juan Matos de Juan of the Puerto Rican Bar Association.

That any group of abolitionists in the U.S. would seek an alliance with elements like the FOP raises serious concerns. Furthermore, once the secret letter came to light in late June, several other board members of organizations whose officers or individual board members had signed it said they had been unaware of the letter’s existence.

Robert Meeropol, son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who were vindictively executed as spies during the McCarthy period, and Bill Babbitt, brother of a Vietnam vet suffering from acute post-traumatic stress disorder who was executed in California, expressed concern over the letter. Both are members of the board of MVFHR.

Meeropol told ThisCantBeHappening, net that he stands “fully in support of a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal.” Babbitt commented, “I think throwing Mumia under the bus is not the way to go in the abolitionist movement. You don’t make bargains with a wolf whose motive is to devour.”

The secret attempt to exclude Abu-Jamal’s case from the world event was also condemned by actor Michael Far-

rell, president of the California abolitionist group Death Penalty Focus, who was unaware that a member of the DPF board had signed the letter. Heidi Boghosian, executive director of the National Lawyers Guild, was also not informed about the letter despite the fact that the NLG is a member organization of the World Congress.

The letter reveals the latest in a long and sordid history of attempts by the FOP to vilify Abu-Jamal and pressure activists not to support him. Boghosian told ThisCantBeHappening that Abu-Jamal’s arrest, trial and appeals process has been “a textbook case of police and prosecutor corruption, malfeasance and abuse.”

Albert Sabo, the presiding judge in Abu-Jamal’s 1982 trial and his subsequent post-conviction relief act appeal in 1995, had been a member of the FOP before his appointment to the bench. Many legal precedents, on both state and federal levels, that should have opened the door to a new trial for Abu-Jamal were reversed when his case came before these courts, causing journalist Linn Washington Jr. to coin the phrase, “the Mumia exception.”

Abu-Jamal attorney Robert Bryan told ThisCantBeHappening, “In all my years as an activist opposing the death penalty, I have never heard of any individual or group in that fight singling out anyone as an exception to our campaign to abolish capital punishment. ... To single someone out and say they don’t count is chilling.”

Abu-Jamal, in an interview from his cell on death row at SCI-Greene with journalist Dave Lindorff, said, “They are really making deals with the devil. ... My instinct, being from Philadelphia, is that money was passed, though I have no evidence to prove it. ... This secret action is a threat to the entire abolitionist movement.” □



# Derechos pro inmigrantes y el discurso de Obama sobre la reforma

Por Teresa Gutiérrez

El presidente Barack Obama pronunció un importante discurso sobre la inmigración el 1 de julio ante una gran expectativa por el movimiento de los derechos pro inmigrantes.

Si los/as inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as esperaban que algo positivo saliera del discurso, recibieron una gran decepción. De hecho, lo que el presidente Obama aprobó como propuesta es todo lo que el movimiento ha estado luchando en contra, no sólo desde el año 2006, sino históricamente.

Obama siguió enmarcando la cuestión de inmigración en el contexto de la cuestión de seguridad, en lugar de en el contexto del trabajo o de los derechos civiles. Él reprendió a los/as trabajadores/as por estar en este país “ilegalmente” y dijo que “se burlan de todos/as aquellos/as que están pasando por el proceso de inmigración legal”. También dijo que los “11 millones” que están en los EEUU sin documentos “deben rendir cuentas”.

Obama hizo un leve intento de distanciarse de la reciente aprobación de la SB 1070 en Arizona calificándola como “mal concebida”. Pero también dijo que era “comprensible” dado el “nivel de frustración” en el país.

El presidente declaró que la frontera sur de EEUU es “más segura hoy que en

cualquier momento en los últimos 20 años”. De hecho, hay “más soldados sobre el terreno en la frontera suroeste que en cualquier otro momento de nuestra historia”.

Hizo hincapié en mayores sanciones para los empresarios que contratan a trabajadores/as sin documentos, diciendo que esto reduciría el incentivo “para que la gente venga aquí, y enfatizó en poner en marcha el sistema E-Verify para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as que soliciten empleo. E-Verify es inquietante no sólo para los/as inmigrantes sino para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as porque refuerza el sistema de vigilancia de la Seguridad Nacional.

Obama manifestó su apoyo al DREAM Act, una legislación que trata de abordar la legalización de los/as millones de jóvenes que vinieron aquí a una edad muy joven y se han criado en este país sin documentos. El DREAM Act ha sido una manzana de la discordia en el movimiento pro-inmigrante, ya que por desgracia impulsa a los/as jóvenes al ejército si no pueden acceder a educación superior o a un trabajo.

Sin embargo, una enorme parte del movimiento ha apoyado a los/as heroicos/as estudiantes que han librado una valiente lucha para el DREAM Act, incluyendo huelgas de hambre que ponen en peligro su salud. Los/as jóvenes que lideran esta lucha están en su mayoría indocumenta-

dos/as y salen valientemente declarando que están “sin papeles y sin miedo”.

El movimiento pro derechos de los/as inmigrantes, especialmente los/as estudiantes y los/as jóvenes que luchan por el DREAM Act, deben luchar contra cualquier intento del gobierno y los medios de comunicación por dividir al movimiento. El llamado de Obama para apoyar el DREAM Act, ignorando otras demandas del movimiento, podría fácilmente convertirse en un punto de división si el movimiento no se une en torno a todas sus demandas.

Obama regañó a los/as republicanos/as en el Congreso por no tratar de llegar a un acuerdo bipartito sobre la reforma integral de inmigración. Lamentablemente, los/as republicanos/as y la extrema derecha en este país que a gritos difaman a los/as inmigrantes y producen un clima xenofóbico y racista contra los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes no son el único problema.

Ni la Casa Blanca ni el Congreso, sin importar a qué lado del pasillo se encuentren los/as políticos, están dispuestos a hacer lo correcto para los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes. ¿Por qué? Porque Washington cumple las órdenes de las corporaciones, el Pentágono, los empresarios y Wall Street.

Hay una profunda crisis económica en este país. El desempleo y las ejecucio-

nes hipotecarias sólo van a aumentar. La clase gobernante necesita chivos expiatorios. Y uno de esos chivos expiatorios es la mano de obra inmigrante.

Los/as inmigrantes fueron bienvenidos/as a este país cuando la economía capitalista estaba fuerte, pero ahora que la economía está débil, son difamados/as y expulsados/as.

Si Obama tuviera la voluntad política, podría emitir una orden ejecutiva legalizando inmediatamente a todos/as en este país. Los sindicatos, así como todos/as los/as trabajadores/as estadounidenses debían presionar en este sentido ya que inmediatamente levantaría el nivel de vida de todos/as. Como se ha dicho muchas veces, “marea creciente levanta todos los barcos”.

Pero si el trabajo de Obama sobre la legislación del cuidado de salud o la crisis financiera es un barómetro, sólo el movimiento social puede asegurar que sus demandas sean satisfechas.

Hay un ala del movimiento pro-inmigrante que se niega a ceder en las demandas por la legalización inmediata, el fin de la militarización de la frontera, la derogación de leyes similares al TLCAN, y el empleo, educación y vivienda para todos. Estas demandas pueden llegar a ser una realidad si el movimiento sigue creciendo y fortaleciéndose. ¡Adelante hacia el Primero de Mayo de 2011! □

## Movimiento Estudiantil Sobre la Inmigración

# Lucha derrota disposiciones anti-inmigrante en Massachusetts

Por Frank Neisser  
Boston

Los/as estudiantes y jóvenes en el Movimiento Estudiantil de Inmigración (SIM por las siglas en inglés), encabezaron una lucha dinámica denominada Esperanza Masiva 2010, que ganó una importante victoria para los derechos de los/as inmigrantes.

El 9 de junio el Senado de Massachusetts aprobó una serie de enmiendas a la ley del presupuesto estatal que eran terriblemente anti-inmigrante, racistas y punitivas. Se incluía una línea telefónica de emergencia anónima para reportar a cualquier persona sospechosa de ser indocumentada o a cualquier empresario sospechoso de contratar a trabajadores/as indocumentados/as, así como disposiciones estrictas para evitar que los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as recibieran beneficio alguno, incluido el servicio básico de salud, subsidios para la vivienda y para la matrícula estatal en las universidades públicas de Massachusetts.

El 10 de junio a las 6 pm estudiantes y jóvenes miembros/as del SIM y sus aliados/as iniciaron una vigilia en las escalinatas del capitolio del Estado de Massachusetts, prometiendo quedarse hasta que



La líder de SIM, Lai Wa Wu

PHOTO: SIM

todas las disposiciones anti-inmigrante fueran retiradas. La vigilia era también en solidaridad con la vigilia permanente en curso en el capitolio del Estado de Arizona desde el 24 de abril en protesta por la ley racista anti-inmigrantes SB 1070 de Arizona, la cual está programada para entrar en vigor a finales de julio.

La vigilia permanente incluyó conferencias de prensa, mítines, marchas, talleres y grupos de presión en el interior del capitolio. El apoyo y la participación en la vigilia continuaron creciendo, con la participación de docenas de grupos de derechos de inmigrantes y organizaciones y grupos progresistas y comunitarios que participaron tomando turnos de vigilia, realizando talleres y debates, formando así fuertes lazos de solidaridad.

El 15 de junio todas las fuerzas que participan en la vigilia se unieron a los sindicatos y otros en una manifestación de 200 personas en el Fenway Park donde los Diamondbacks de Arizona iniciaron una serie de juegos de beisbol en contra de las Medias Rojas de Boston. La amplia cobertura por los medios de comunicación de esta manifestación ha despertado la conciencia sobre la lucha.

El 21 de junio los/as estudiantes celebraron una conferencia de prensa en la que entregaron más de 1.000 firmas en oposición a la enmienda anti-inmigrante a los legisladores en el capitolio. El 22 de junio otra gran manifestación se llevó a cabo.

Las actividades continuaron durante toda la semana hasta el 25 de junio cu-

ando la Esperanza Masiva 2010 y el SIM celebraron una conferencia de prensa anunciando que el presupuesto final reflejó una victoria — todo el lenguaje y las disposiciones anti-inmigrante fueron retiradas, excepto las que reflejan la práctica actual. Los/as estudiantes anunciaron que iban a poner fin a la vigilia y organizaron una celebración de clausura. Pero el movimiento que organizaron continúa, y luchará contra todas las leyes de Arizona y los demás ataques en contra de los derechos de los/as inmigrantes.

Comentando sobre la importancia de la lucha, la líder de SIM, Lai Wa Wu dijo: “SIM no podría haber logrado esta victoria sin las coaliciones masivas comunitarias que se unieron para luchar contra los sentimientos anti-inmigrante. La lucha por los derechos de los/as inmigrantes no es una lucha sólo para las comunidades indocumentadas, sino que es una lucha por la dignidad y el respeto de todas las personas - ciudadanos/as y no ciudadanos/as por igual. Sabemos que esto es sólo el comienzo, y habrá muchas más batallas por venir, pero siempre y cuando nuestras comunidades mantengan la solidaridad, juntos vamos a triunfar”. □